

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 STR-01

AID-05 CEA-01 COME-00 EB-07 EA-06 FRB-03 IO-10 NEA-09

OPIC-03 TRSE-00 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /108 W

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R 202025Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8512

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 02693

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: EGEN, EEC, UK

SUBJECT: EC REFERENDUM

REF: LONDON 1157

1. ACCORDING TO ROBIN O'NEILL (ASSISTANT SECRETARY,
CABINET OFFICE) THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO
ISSUE ITS WHITE PAPER ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE EC
REFERENDUM BEFORE THE END OF FEBRUARY. THIS WILL ALLOW
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TIME FOR PARLIAMENTARY AND PUBLIC DEBATE BEFORE THE

GOVERNMENT INTRODUCES ITS LEGISLATION ON THE REFERENDUM, WHICH IT HOPES TO DO BEFORE THE END OF MARCH. A WHITE PAPER ON THE RESULTS OF RENEGOTIATION IS EXPECTED TO BE ISSUED AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME AS THE REFERENDUM BILL IS INTRODUCED.

2. THE MAIN ISSUES WHICH THE CABINET HAS BEEN DISCUSSING IN CONNECTION WITH THE WHITE PAPER ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE REFERENDUM ARE: A) THE NATURE OF THE QUESTION TO BE ASKED; B) WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONDUCT AN INFORMATION PROGRAM OF ITS OWN, AND WHETHER IT SHOULD ESTABLISH RULES FOR CAMPAIGNS BY OTHERS; C) WHETHER THE REFERENDUM RESULTS SHOULD BE TALLIED ON A NATIONAL OR A REGIONAL BASIS.

3. ACCORDING TO O'NEILL, NONE OF THESE ISSUES HAS BEEN RESOLVED. AGREEMENTS ON SOME OF THEM MAY BE WORKED OUT BETWEEN NOW AND THE END OF NEXT WEEK, BUT O'NEILL EXPECTS THAT MUCH OF THE WHITE PAPER WILL BE LEFT STUDIOUSLY VAGUE, SO THAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN KEEP ITS OPTIONS OPEN UNTIL THE REFERENDUM BILL IS INTRODUCED.

4. O'NEILL SAID THAT THERE IS A GENERAL CONSENSUS IN THE CABINET THAT THE QUESTION SHOULD BE KEPT AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE. THE ANTI-MARKETEERS WOULD LIKE TO SEE NO REFERENCE IN THE QUESTION TO THE RENEGOTIATION OF THE TERMS OF ENTRY. THE PRO-MARKETEERS BELIEVE THAT THE QUESTION SHOULD INCLUDE SOME INDICATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT THE TERMS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY RENEGOTIATED. IN SUPPORT OF THEIR POSITION THEY CITE THE LANGUAGE OF THE LABOUR PARTY'S FEBRUARY MANIFESTO WHICH STATED THAT A REFERENDUM SHOULD BE HELD "IF RENEGOTIATIONS ARE SUCCESSFUL."

5. THE ANTI-MARKETEERS ARE AGAINST A GOVERNMENT INFORMATION PROGRAM, WHEREAS THE PRO-MARKETEERS ARE FOR ONE. A MAJOR PROBLEM IS HOW TO MAKE ANY INFORMATION ISSUED BY THE GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVE ENOUGH TO SATISFY ALL SIDES. O'NEILL DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT IT

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 02693

WOULD BE REALISTIC FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO TRY TO
REGULATE THE CAMPAIGNS OF THE PRO- AND ANTI-MARKET
GROUPS THAT HAVE BEEN FORMED FOR THE REFERENDUM. IT
WOULD BE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT, HE SAID, TO ESTABLISH
FAIR CONTROLS ON EXPENSES.

6. THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO COUNT THE VOTES IS ALSO
DIFFICULT. MOST OF THE CABINET WOULD
PREFER A NATIONAL TALLY, ACCORDING TO O'NEILL,
INSTEAD OF ONE ON THE BASIS OF COUNTY OR CONSTITUENCY.
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IT MAY BE NECESSARY, HOWEVER, FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO

AGREE TO SOME FORM OF REGIONAL BREAKDOWN IN ORDER TO GET THE SUPPORT OF SCOTTISH, WELSH AND NORTHERN IRISH MPS FOR THE REFERENDUM LEGISLATION.

7. ONE ISSUE WHICH HAS NOT BEEN SETTLED -- AND WHICH MAY EVEN NOT BE SETTLED WHEN THE REFERENDUM BILL IS INTRODUCED -- IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE REFERENDUM WILL BE BINDING ON PARLIAMENT. AS O'NEILL POINTED OUT, THE FACT THAT IT IS CONSIDERED BINDING ON THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT MAKE IT BINDING ON PARLIAMENT AS A WHOLE. IF, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WAS A LOW TURNOUT IN THE REFERENDUM AND ONLY A SMALL MAJORITY AGAINST CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP, IT IS NOT AT ALL CERTAIN THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD GET LEGISLATION THROUGH PARLIAMENT (WHERE THERE IS STILL A MAJORITY IN FAVOR OF MEMBERSHIP) IN ORDER TO BRING BRITAIN OUT OF THE COMMUNITY.

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